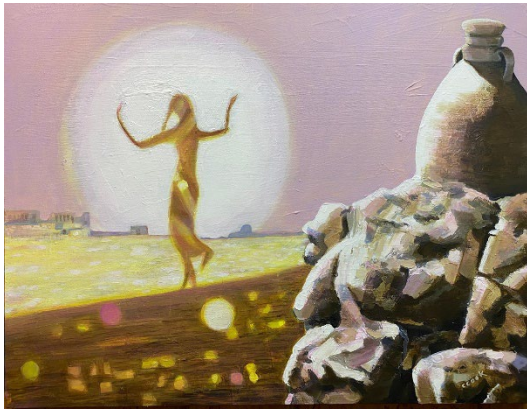


*100 Days in John, Pt. 6*  
***Everything I Ever Did!***  
*John 4: 15-30*

**First Presbyterian Church  
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As we take up the second half of this extraordinary story, I thought we'd start with artist Chris Cook's contemporary painting.<sup>1</sup> Jesus and the Samaritan woman have talked from noon towards the end of the day. The woman hurries into the light, on her way back to town with the news, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did!" Her arms are raised. She runs as one just relieved of a great burden. Indeed, the woman has left her heavy

water jug by the well. She's filled now with living water. The acceptance and love of Jesus have made her forget for a while even the daily necessity of drawing water. This is a picture of joy. "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did!" What exactly did Jesus tell her about herself? Why did it make such a difference?

I remember that the relationship with my then girlfriend had been running on guilt and fumes for about 8 months. In the summer I had tried to end it, but she threatened me. "If you break up with me, you'll never love again." Yikes. But at Christmas, I re-met Rhonda. And my heart came alive again. Now I really was going to break up with the old girlfriend. She was not happy. "You're the most selfish person that ever lived," she told me. I didn't argue. She didn't stop. "The truth is that you're incapable of love. This new relationship with Rhonda won't work. Because you simply don't know how to love." Wowsers. Was that true? I felt like I'd been cursed. I decided to do some therapy sessions and find out if something was the matter with me.

During the course of the counseling, there came one moment I'll never forget. I came to an admission. Not of some deep, dark hideous act. It was just a little raw nugget of childish selfishness. It seemed to me symptomatic of a spoiled little boy and I was embarrassed. I almost wished I had done something dramatically terrible instead of this thing. I waited for the therapist to conclude our session and dismiss me as a client only pretending to want to grow. But she didn't

bat an eyelash. She just continued on. She saw; she knew, oh yes, she knew and she did not reject me. In fact a few weeks later she lifted the curse for me. “You’re not incapable of love,” she said, “You just haven’t found the right person yet.” I was known—down to the petty raw ugliness, and not rejected. And so I was free. Empowered to change, from the inside out. I was alive again.

“Come see a man who told me everything I ever did,” said the woman who had been talking to Jesus. She left her water jar outside of town and ran back to the village. “Come see, come see! He told me everything. Could this be the Christ?”

Had Jesus really given her a comprehensive list of the events of her life? Of course not. What he had done, though, was to put his finger right on the place of the woman’s most fundamental pain. He touched her where she hurt. And his touch proved to be healing. There are memories, events, moments which define the very essence of us. Jesus touched such a place in the woman at the well.

We remember from last week that Jesus had met the woman by Jacob’s well in the heat of the day. He asked her for a drink of water. She seemed astounded that he as a Jewish rabbi spoke to her as a woman from Samaria. Jesus offered her living water, an inner spring that could well up within her to eternal life. He could give her a source that would quench the thirst in her heart. She didn’t quite understand, but she knew this daily routine of having to fetch water in the blazing sun was no way to live. “Sir, give me this water!”

Jesus answered her request by making a request of his own. “Go, call your husband.” Bang. Where did that come from? She replied with a straightforward, “I have no husband.” In that world, she was without protection and social standing. There had to be a backstory. And Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit, shined a light on that story. He knew her. “You are right in saying ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband.”

There it is. Whatever the reasons, we as readers know this woman has suffered loss. She has known the pain of partings. At the very least, even if the first five men simply died, she has about her the taint of a man-killer. A black widow. But we also know there’s more. She’s living with a man without the commitment of marriage. Does she have him, or does he have her? She’s at risk. The balance in the relationship is skewed. Shame has entered in. There’s a reason why she doesn’t go with the other women to fetch water at a cooler time. Shame, threat, fear, brokenness, loss, dysfunction have tainted everything.

And Jesus touched her pain. It felt like he told her everything she ever did because he put his finger on the very heart of her pain, and her life—these broken relationships. She resisted at first. She tried to change the subject. But he wouldn't let her. He kept holding two things together: 1) I know you. 2) I am the Savior. I know you to the core. Ask and I will give you the living water that fills up that dry well from the inside out.

Jesus still comes to the shattered, the cursed, those with dry wells and deep fears. He makes his offer. "Ask and I will give you living water, welling up to eternal life." He still puts his finger right on the heart of the pain in our lives. And he still heals. He is the one who knows and yet loves, who sees and forgives, who restores even that which seemed irrevocably broken.

Once upon a time, a woman began coming to a Bible study I led on Tuesday nights. She was known to me not because she said anything about herself, but because her parents were well to do members of the community and the church. She was thirty-something, pretty but very slightly built. A spring wind would have blown her over. She said practically nothing. And yet she kept coming.

It was clear, if you thought about it, that this woman had been shattered. Somewhere along the line she had been hurt deeply. Though who could say how or why? She was searching, longing for something but frightened to move even an inch beyond a tightly drawn circle.

Our group of rag tag seekers and finders of Christ accepted her quietly and patiently. One man, who's since gone into the ministry, seemed to make it his mission to make her laugh. And in spite of herself, a lovely, melodious laugh would come out. Slowly, her story came out as well. First we learned that she had spent years trying to be a professional opera singer. This little woman had a voice that issued from a huge soul. Her small frame, though, made it difficult for her to sustain the demands of opera. She had not had much success.

But that was not the heart of it. It turns out she had been married to a minister. His betrayal shattered not only her sense of herself, but her connection to God as well. She yearned for the care of her heavenly Father, but everything to do with God was interwoven with this man of God who had squashed her dreams. The poor dear was caught. She knew that she needed God so she showed up at our meetings. She was so terribly wounded that she was frightened to death of God and stayed very quiet.

But as the months turned past a year, the frozen soul began to thaw. She was known, accepted, loved, and allowed to come along at her own pace. And God kept speaking to her from his word. More and more of her story came out. She began to trust. She lent her gorgeous voice to the choir. She became filled with ardor for God, in ways deeper and more joyful than she had ever known. I've not heard from her in many years. But the last time I did, she had remarried and was working at a battered women's shelter in a large city, giving to others the love of God she had come to know. She was glad for me to share her story.

*Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.* Jesus put his finger on the string of sundered marriages. The essence of the Samaritan woman's life was relational brokenness. How might Jesus speak the meaning of your life in just a sentence or two?

Imagine if he said, "Come sit with me a while." And we replied, "I'm just too busy right now." What if next he said, "You are right in saying you are too busy. You never rest. Because the engine inside you always runs. You feel that if you stop you will have no worth. Better to stay ever working."

Or suppose Jesus said, "Draw close to me." And we replied, "I don't like to get too close. Contact makes me uncomfortable." What if he said next, "You are right in saying contact makes you nervous. When people touch you, a desire to be soothed and held awakens. Then you recoil. Because people who touch you want something. And they might trade touch for something of yours that can be crushed, trampled and discarded. Better to stay away."

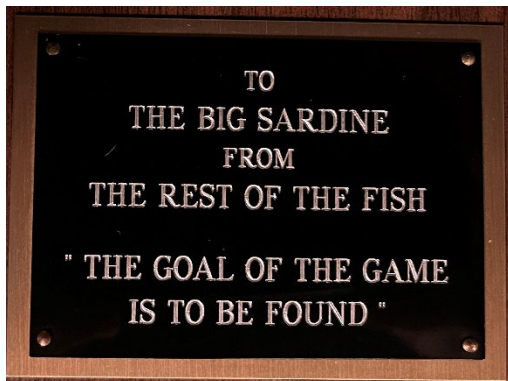
Or maybe Jesus might say, "Let me look at you. Let's see each other face to face." And we reply, "Eyes make me nervous." And what if he said next, "You are right that a steady gaze worries you. You fear that if someone saw you clearly, they would find the sight of you to be repellent. You feel that all your flaws glare out under clear sight. Under the clothes, the makeup, the humor, the wit and the wisdom, you shrink in fear from being seen. Better to dodge direct looks and work the angles."

To all our deflections, Jesus answers as he did the Samaritan woman. "I see you. I already know you. I love you. And I'm here to tell you that your heavenly Father also sees you, knows you and loves you. He seeks people who will love him back, straight from the heart in all sincerity and openness. Not many people will dare risk opening themselves to the Father's seeking, searching gaze of mercy. But those who do will find that he drives away the darkness. His light vaporizes fear.

His words bring parched souls to life. His knowing us sets us free in forgiveness. He saves us in order to send us to seek and to find others. Your Father longs for people who will respond to his truth-telling, life-changing love.”

Have you ever played the game called Sardines? It’s like Hide and Seek but in reverse. In Hide and Seek, everyone hides except for one person who is seeking. But in Sardines, one person goes to hide. Everyone looks for him. If they find him, they hide with him. All the hiders keep getting found. The game ends when everyone is hiding together except the last person who’s still trying to find the group.

Once on a young adult retreat, I got to be the first person to hide in Sardines. I found a great hiding place. The problem was my hiding place was too good. No one found me. So there could be no pack of people hiding together. They all got frustrated. And it became a big joke. With my great hiding place, I missed the whole point.



A year or so later when we moved from that church, the young adults had a plaque made for me. It said, “To the big Sardine from the Rest of the Fish: The goal of the game is to get found!” That’s a metaphor for life in Christ. Too many of us are playing Hide and Seek as if the goal is for the truth of us never to be found out. That only leaves us alone, lonely and cramped and everyone in our lives frustrated.

The goal is to be found, so we can have community. So we can be connected to our heavenly Father. For God our Father seeks people to worship him in spirit and in truth.

Jesus found the woman alone in the heat of the day grinding out the daily tasks of a miserable life. He put his finger on the source of her pain. He invited her into owning the truth of her brokenness and discovering the truth of his healing, forgiving love. He wanted to turn stale water into living water. To reconnect her to the seeking, loving heavenly Father. He spoke the meaning of her life in a way that encapsulated the essence of her whole story. And he did not reject her. He saw her, accepted her, loved her and invited her into relationship. She could have stayed hidden. She could have fled. Instead, she got found. And immediately ran to find others with the astounding news.

How about you? Will you risk his gaze? His closeness? His desire to be with you always? Come see a man who told me everything I ever did! Surely, he is the Savior!

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Cook, “The Woman at the Well,” <https://chriscookart.net/woman-at-the-well/>. Used by permission.